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The Ancestral Trail

Cyber Challenge In the Next Dimension

36 Scoredef, Sinister Supervirus

Hypnotized by an evil computer virus

Juliet Heller

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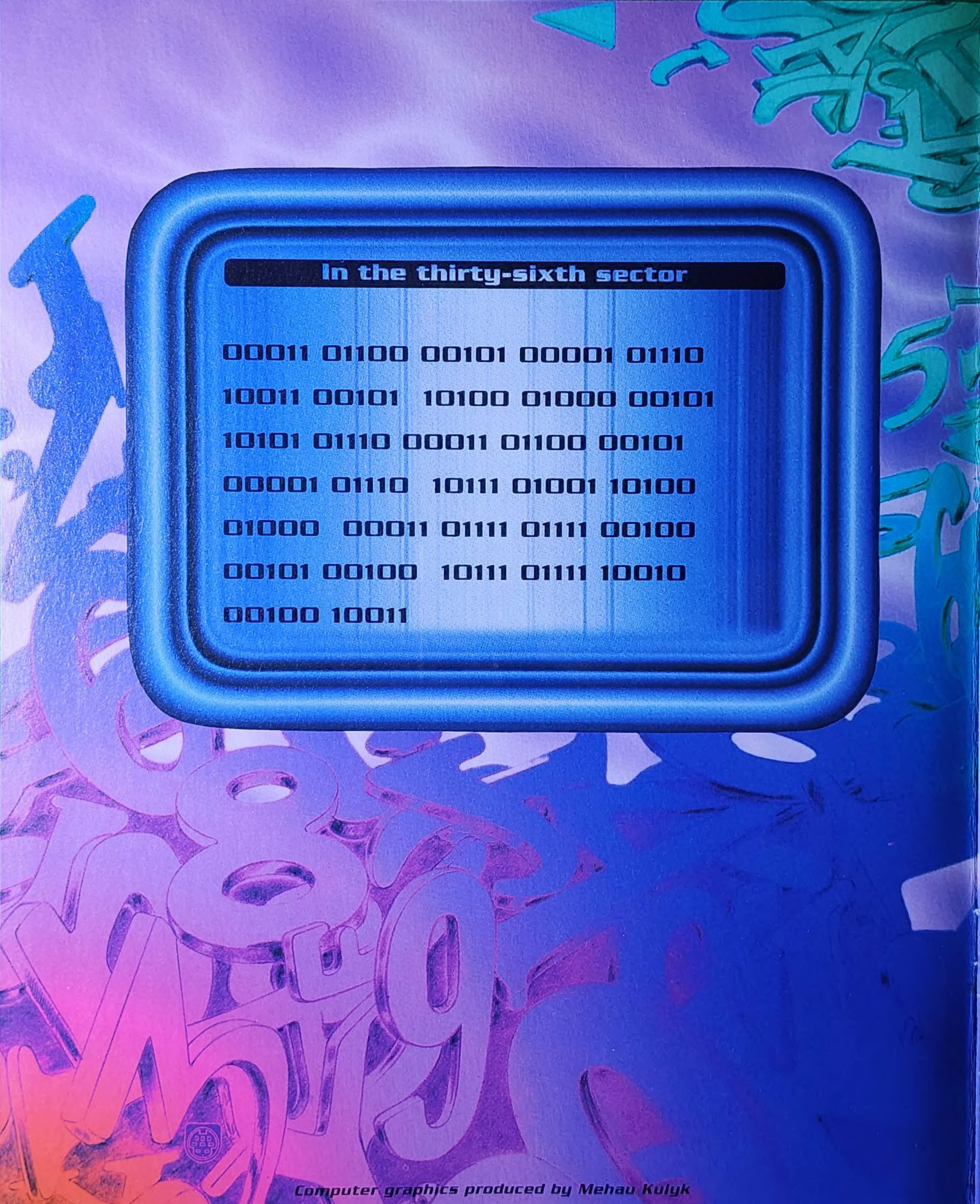
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Computer graphics produced by Mehau Kulyk

Holding tightly on to its controls, Richard guided the cyber cruiser away from the strange world of Identico. An awful wailing sound reverberated through the air as the balloon dimension careered away in the opposite direction.

Richard would have liked to have stopped the flying machine so that he could witness the awesome spectacle, but he had more pressing concerns. Speeding towards him were hundreds of the oddly shaped objects that he had noticed earlier.

In all colours and sizes, they raced through the air on a direct collision course with the cruiser. "What are these things?" a worried Richard demanded of Robo.

"Teronites," said the voice of his companion, "corrupted digitized computer code."

Richard frowned. "I don't understand a word you're saying! What do you mean?"

The robot's spherical head swivelled round to face him. "Cannot answer question. Insufficient data available."

Danger in numbers

Richard gave a gasp of frustration, the teronites were now almost upon him. Swerving to his left, he carefully avoided one of them as it skidded by. He knew he would not be able to evade them for long. In desperation, he looked for a place to land the flying machine.

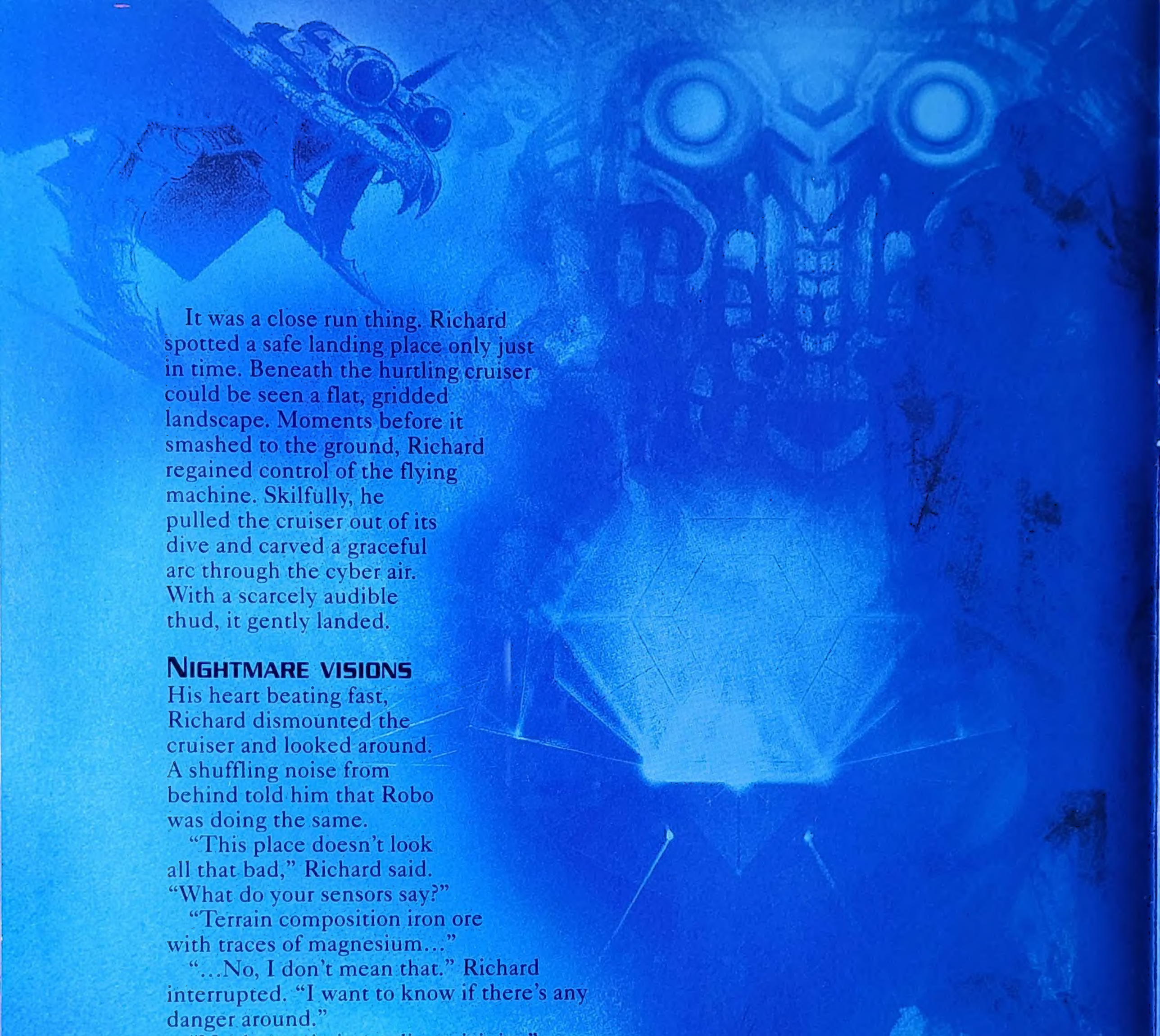
"Advise Chosen One to land cyber cruiser," Robo read Richard's thoughts.

"That's what I'm trying to do!" he cried. "It's easier said than done!"

The teronites were now all around him. Richard could see nothing else. He took a chance and aimed the flying machine's pointed nose towards whatever lay below.

The cyber cruiser screeched angrily as its speed increased and it began a downwards spiral. A stream of vapour gushed from its rear.

"Hold on tight," Richard advised. "I think we're going to crash!"



It was a close run thing. Richard spotted a safe landing place only just in time. Beneath the hurtling cruiser could be seen a flat, gridded landscape. Moments before it smashed to the ground, Richard regained control of the flying machine. Skilfully, he pulled the cruiser out of its dive and carved a graceful arc through the cyber air. With a scarcely audible thud, it gently landed.

NIGHTMARE VISIONS

His heart beating fast, Richard dismounted the cruiser and looked around. A shuffling noise from behind told him that Robo was doing the same.

"This place doesn't look all that bad," Richard said. "What do your sensors say?"

"Terrain composition iron ore with traces of magnesium..."

"...No, I don't mean that." Richard interrupted. "I want to know if there's any danger around."

"No danger in immediate vicinity," Robo affirmed.

It was then that Richard suddenly began to feel drowsy. Within moments, he was finding it difficult to keep his eyes open. Then he spotted something that brought him back to his senses.

Floating slowly into view came the terrifying form of Mortex, the molten trail-blazer, whom Richard had supposedly destroyed in the underground catacombs.

Richard tried to speak but something prevented the words from coming out.

There were further shocks in store for him. Following closely behind Mortex came Tengam, the gravity defier and Toxis, the poison predator.

His feet seemed rooted to the spot as the creatures came ever nearer. Then Richard heard a familiar voice.

"Warning! Chosen One must break Scoredef's hypnotic trance."

The voice brought Richard back to his senses. Abruptly, the apparitions dissolved into nothingness. "Robo, what happened?" Richard said shakily.

"Chosen One was held in hypnotic trance. Scoredef was attempting to corrupt your mind with images from the past."

As the robot spoke, the distant sound of music could be heard.

"Robo, where's that noise coming from?" Richard asked.

Deadly virus

The robot's internal processors whirred into action. "Melodic sound emission originates from vicinity of Scoredef."

"Of who?" Richard exclaimed.

"Scoredef," Robo repeated.

"Who – or what – is Scoredef?"

Before Robo could answer the question, a strange form sped swiftly into view. Metallic in composition, it resembled a bloated humanoid head. A pair of evil-looking green eyes were set in a framework of shining notches and bumps that seemed to serve no purpose. For a mouth, it had a gaping hole that looked capable of swallowing Richard in one gulp.

"Scoredef, I take it?" Richard said.

The newcomer scrutinized him. In a voice devoid of emotion, it finally spoke. ">10 CHECK OBJECT. GOTO 45."

A look of complete bemusement spread over Richard's features. "What did it say?"

"Scoredef is communicating via computer programming language. Scoredef is computer virus in three dimensional form."

"What do you mean? Computer virus?"

"Computer virus is malignant programme code designed to corrupt computer systems."

Scoredef spoke again. “>45 EVALUATION PROCEDURE INITIATED. GOTO 100.”

A high-pitched humming sound could be heard emanating from within the creature.

“>100 NON-DIGITAL COMPOSITION. GOTO 110.”

Richard stared at the living computer virus. “Robo,” he finally said. “I think it’s probably a good idea if we get away from here as quickly as possible…”

Sticky situation

“>110 ORGANIC COMPOUND DETECTED. GOTO 150.” Scoredef’s inhuman tones interrupted Richard’s voice.

“>150 EVASIVE ACTION PROCEDURE INITIATED.”

With Robo shouting urgent warnings, Richard watched in grim fascination as a jet of creamy coloured liquid spurted out from Scoredef’s mouth and gushed over Richard’s body.

In disbelief, Richard studied the liquid as it began to flow over him. It was almost as if it were alive. Hesitantly, he touched a small droplet of the substance and immediately found that his fingers were welded together.

"It's some kind of glue!" Richard exclaimed, as the sticky gunge continued to envelop his body armour. It was not long before he found himself completely covered in it. Despite all his efforts, it was impossible to move any of his limbs. "Robo – do something!" Richard yelled.

Perma beam

The little robot looked at his companion. His inner components busily searched for a solution to his predicament.

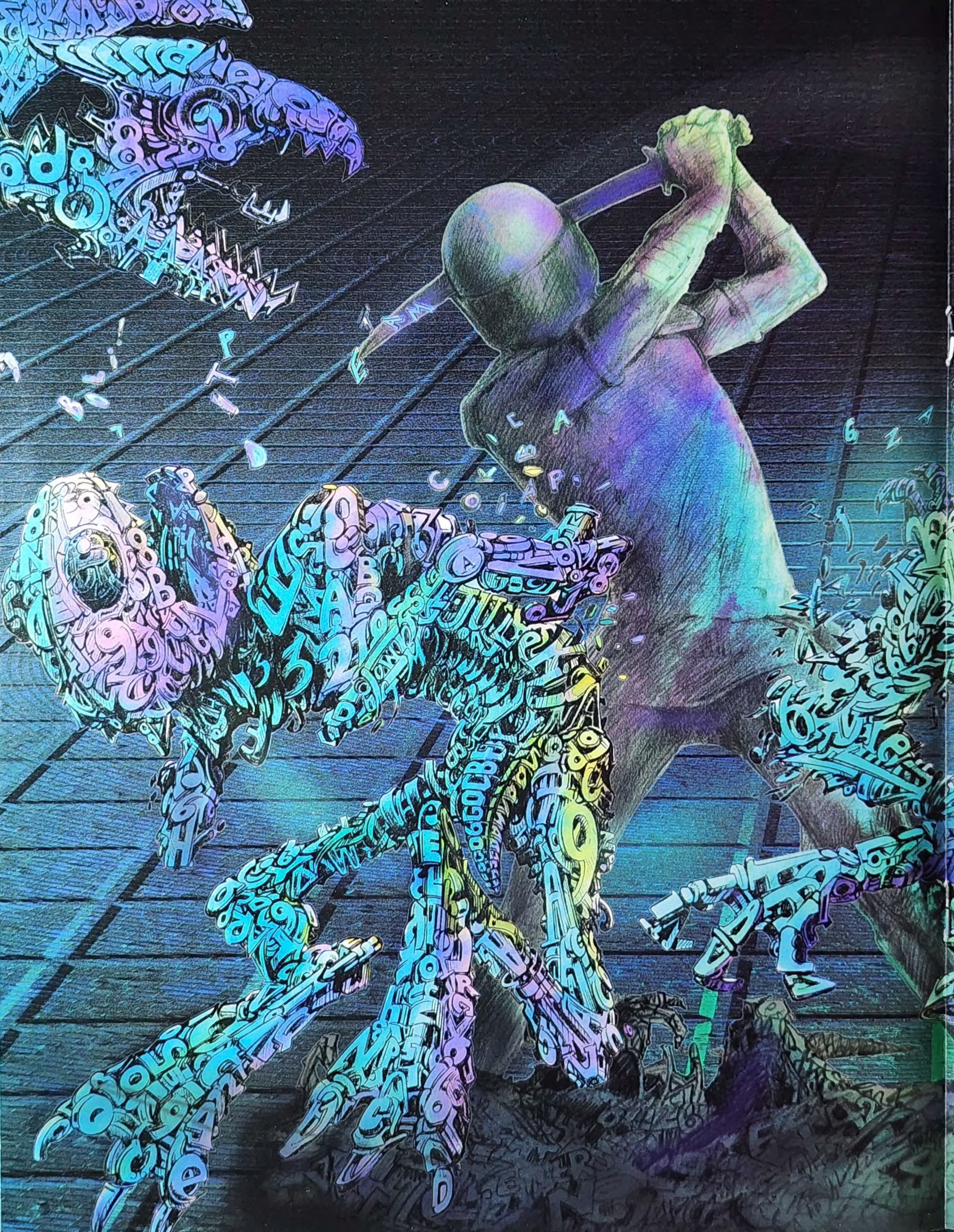
Richard did not have long to wait.

Without warning, he felt a blast of icy, cold air hit him squarely in the face.

In an instant, the gluey substance hardened and its colour dulled. Robo's perma beam had frozen the glue.

Richard discovered that the material that covered him had taken on the consistency of brittle pastry. Flexing his arms, it was no problem at all for him break free from his icy bonds.

With a crunch, the substance fell away from his body. All that remained was a pile of crumbled shards on the cyber floor.


BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!

An angry buzzing noise could be heard in the background. It came from Scoredef, whose misshapen form was now changing colour rapidly. Patterns of red, blue and green light danced angrily before Richard's wondering eyes.

Scoredef spoke again.

"ERROR. GOTO 133."

Richard quickly looked around to find the cyber cruiser. He would rather take to the skies and face the teronites, than remain on the ground and do battle with Scoredef.

His adversary seemed to anticipate this.

Suddenly, there was movement from above. Richard looked up to see a horde of teronites speedily descending from above. They were heading straight for him

TERONITE ATTACK

Drawing his sword, Richard held it aloft like a cricket bat. As the first teronite arrived, he swung the blade in a broad sweep and smashed the object back in the direction from which it had come.

Other teronites quickly arrived on the scene but they too were dispatched.

Soon, even Scoredef realized that his attack was no use against the reflexes that had managed to keep Richard safe throughout his perilous adventures in the cyber dimension.

With a silent signal from the virus, the teronites ceased their attacks.

The creature pondered the situation for a moment and then spoke.

"\>350 PRINT 'CHOSEN ONE SURRENDER. YOU CANNOT WITHSTAND THE POWER OF SCOREDEF.' GOTO 360."

Richard pulled himself up to his full height and stared at Scoredef defiantly. "You can't scare me," he said, "I've seen more frightening creatures than you!"

Destructive threat

"\>360 PRINT 'PUT DOWN YOUR BLADE OR I WILL DESTROY YOUR ROBOTIC COMPANION.' GOTO 370."

"Protect yourself, Chosen One," the robot chirped. "Do not concern yourself with Robo."

Once more, an angry buzzing noise filled the air. Scoredef was growing bigger.

Richard was quick to react. In the blink of an eye, he rushed over and stood before Robo, becoming a human shield. As he did so, he noticed that a new binary message had appeared on the little robot's front panel.

"I must stall him," Richard thought aloud. "I've got to have time to decode that message!"

Then he had a flash of inspiration. "Okay, Scoredef, I give up," he called out. "I surrender. But first let me say goodbye to the robot – he's been a good friend."

There was a brief pause before Scoredef replied. "\>370 PRINT 'REQUEST GRANTED.' GOTO 380."

Richard turned to face the robot, his eyes rapidly scanning the binary panel.

"Robo," he quietly said, "can you do something to distract Scoredef?"

The robot started to reply but Richard cut him short. "Don't say a word. I know that you can't whisper!"

Richard was recalling the moment in the robot graveyard, when Robo's shrill voice had alerted the dakom and almost cost them their lives.

"Do anything – sing a song, dance – anything!" Richard quietly pleaded.

Robo took him at his word. As Richard ploughed through the rows of binary digits, the robot began to shake frantically. Waving his arms around wildly and spinning his head like a gyroscope, Robo began to sing.

It bore no relation to any melody that Richard had ever heard. It consisted of a rapid series of digital beeps. Like the sound of chalk on a blackboard, it set Richard's teeth on edge.

Scoredef regarded the stocky robot in utter confusion,

"Got it!" Richard exclaimed in triumph. "Stop the noise! Robo, you've got write a programme that will cancel out Scoredef."

"Affirmative," Robo replied.

Deception revealed

Richard's words had not gone unnoticed. With another howl of anger, the living computer virus prepared to attack.

">380 PRINT 'ERROR CODE 30. YOU HAVE LIED.' GOTO 150."

"Quick, Robo," Richard said. "There's no time to lose!"

">150 EVASIVE ACTION PROCEDURE INITIATED."

"I wonder what it's got in store for us now?" Richard shuddered.

As Robo worked frantically on the computer programme that would save them, Richard could only look in awe at the dreadful form of Scoredef.

The creature seemed to be growing even bigger. In moments, it was twice the size it had been when it had first appeared. Richard felt his knees start to quiver.

Still growing, the creature moved towards the hapless pair. "C'mon, Robo!" Richard urged "Quick!"

The robot did not attempt to respond. Its internal processors were stretched to breaking point.

Suddenly, a shaft of light blasted out from Scoredef. Richard was lifted from his feet and throw to the floor. Time was running out fast. He could not hope to withstand many more such attacks.

Coded antidote

Robo finally answered Richard's pleas. "Anti-virus programme complete," he said. "Preparing to broadcast..."

At once, the air was filled with an illegible gaggle of electronic sound that came from Robo's digital speakers. It reminded Richard of the noise that a tape recorder makes when it is set to fast-forward. It made no sense to him at all.

Scoredef added its own voice to the din. ">550 RECEIVING PROGRAMME DATA. GOTO 350."

Richard watched intently to see what the virus' reaction would be to Robo's electronic broadcast. He broke into a cold sweat and fidgeted with the tension.

"Robo, it's not working..." he called.

He was wrong. Even as Richard spoke, Scoredef was beginning to shrink in size.

A high-pitched scream came from the creature. Then, in a voice that was filled with fear, it spoke again. "SYSTEM ERROR -22. ILLEGAL DATA INPUT. RUNNING DIAGNOSTICS."

A shroud of smoke appeared around the desperately panicking computer virus.

Abruptly, there was a bright flash of light that came from the centre of the creature. Richard watched in relief as Scoredef began to fade away. The light around the virus rippled and then Scoredef was gone forever. Just before it disappeared it spoke for the last time. ">500 FATAL ERROR," it said, "PRINT 'EVIL ONE I HAVE FAILED YOU.' GOTO 500."

Robo wiped a bead of sweat from his forehead and looked at Robo.

"Well done," he smiled.

GRATEFUL SURPRISE

His relief was short lived. As the words left his lips, a sound from above made him look up. Heading towards him were thousands of teronites.

"Oh no!" Richard cried. "Robo, quick – call the cyber cruiser!"

Immediately, the cyber cruiser swept into view and the pair jumped aboard. It was too late. Like an angry swarm of giant bees, the teronites sped through the air. It was obvious that any attempt by Richard to take to the skies would be foolhardy.

Then something unexpected happened. Instead of attacking the cyber cruiser and its occupants, the teronites began to form into a shape. Richard watched in awe and then realized what they were doing.

"Robo, look – it's an arrow," he yelled. "I think they are pointing at something."

The destruction of Scoredef had somehow revealed a strange ornamental structure on the landscape.

"What are they trying to tell us?"

Robo hesitated then spoke. "Teronites are no longer under control of Scoredef. Pointing to location of Omni piece."

"Do you mean that an Omni piece is inside that place?" Richard gasped.

"Affirmative," Robo confirmed. "Will enter structure and retrieve Omni piece."

Before Richard could reply, the robot hovered away from his perch on the cyber cruiser and headed towards the building.

Second Omni piece

Richard watched as Robo entered the building and returned moments later clutching a shiny, metallic triangle. There was a grinding noise as the small compartment in Robo's torso slid open. The Omni piece was safely deposited within. "Second Omni piece retrieved," the robot confirmed.

"Thank you," Richard called to the teronites, as he watched the arrow shape disperse and then disappear into the distance.

With Robo perching at the rear of the cruiser, he cranked up the engines and prepared to head off.

"Where to?" he asked the robot.

Terror from below

It was then that he heard a strange creaking noise. It seemed to be coming from somewhere on the ground.

Richard looked around nervously but could see nothing. "What now?" he said in dismay. The last thing he needed after all the recent excitement was another vile creature to do battle with.

"Cannot answer question. Insufficient data available." Robo said.

"What am I going to do with you?" Richard smiled grimly

In an instant, the grin was wiped from his face. Without warning, the creaking noise grew louder and the gridded landscape began to churn and split.

Richard watched with a mixture of amazement and horror as a spiky metallic limb burst from the floor and pointed up to the cyber cruiser.

He recognized it instantly. It obviously belonged to some kind of insect creature.

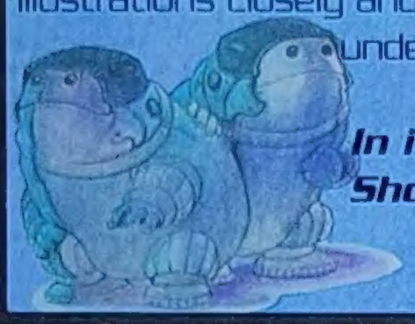
A lump came to Richard's throat as the newcomer began to force itself out of the hole in the ground it had created. He started to tremble.

SHOOMI'S SANCTUARY

Enter into the Cyber Dimension and engage optical recognition to find...

▶ Shoomi and Shoobi

Richard and Robo's jolly little followers are still keeping a close eye on our heroes. Study this issue's illustrations closely and see if you can spot them in under three minutes.



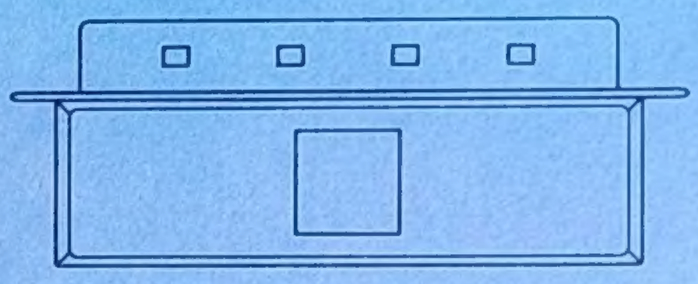
In issue 35 Shoomi and Shoobi were on page 548.

▶ Computer Challenge

Hidden somewhere in this issue is a vitally important computer component from the sinister Cyber Dimension. Use your visual skills to help Richard and Robo locate it in less than three minutes.

When you have discovered the component's hiding place, can you guess what it is and what its function might be?

In the last issue, a computer terminator plug was hidden on page 560.



Terminators are small components that connect to SCSI (Small Computer System Interface) devices. They act as a kind of electrical sponge, soaking up any mis-directed data that might otherwise damage computer systems. When a computer is performing an operation such as copying a file, terminators help to stop data becoming corrupted.

▶ Games boards

In this issue you will find the second piece of your Mainframe Control and Cyber Chess games boards. Cut it out and keep it safe. There will be two other pieces in later issues.

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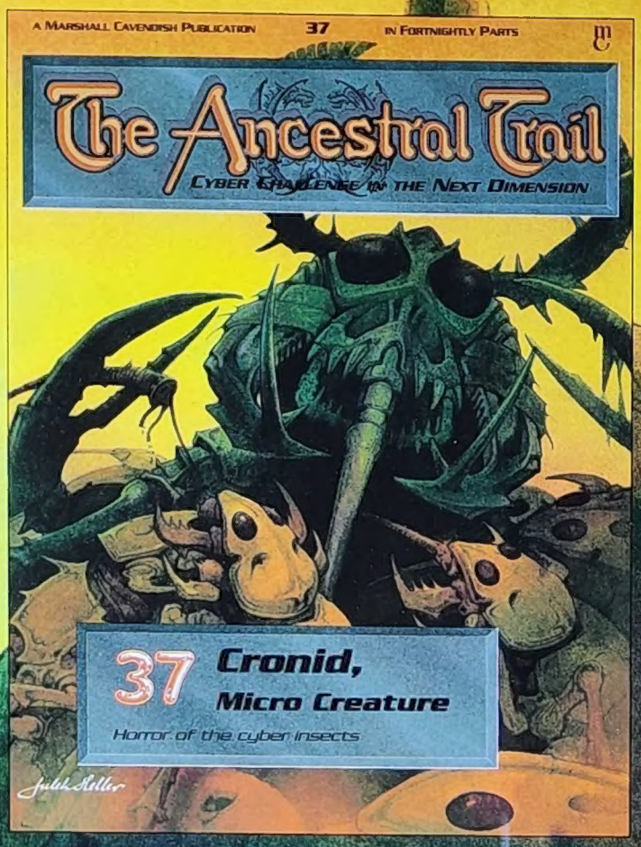

In Issue 37

Cronid,
Micro Creature

Richard and Robo are trapped in a microscopic world inhabited by the petronites and their evil master.

plus

- More Techscan cards for your collection.
- More Cyber Power cards
- More Cyber Chess playing pieces.

Coming in Issue 38

Mescon, Menacing Multi-Form

The pair enter a zoo containing creatures from different worlds and dimensions. Can they escape – or will they become prime specimens?

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